

Sample Op/Ed Story or Letter to the Editor

***Flashing Red. Kids Ahead.* Public Awareness Campaign and the Importance of School Bus Safety**

BY _____

The 2013-14 school year is an exciting time for our district's educators, parents, and especially, students. When planning for a new school year, it is important to note that it has been a couple of months since Arkansas motorists have shared the streets, roadways and highways with our big, yellow school buses. Each school day, these buses carry a very precious cargo – our students. Our district would like to remind all motorists to be especially alert and obey all traffic laws whenever they are near or around a school bus.

School bus safety is an important issue in every Arkansas community. We must all work together to make sure that our students travel safely to and from school and school-related activities each day. Our district wants to remind motorists that it is illegal to pass a stopped school bus when its red lights are flashing and students are getting on or off the bus. This is why we are actively supporting and participating in the ***Flashing Red. Kids Ahead***, statewide, public awareness campaign. This campaign, which will begin August 12, 2013, and conclude August 30, 2013, focuses on informing parents, students and the public about the importance on school bus safety and the need for all motorists to obey traffic laws when they are near a school bus.

On average, a bus stops for approximately three minutes to load or unload students. In simplest terms, a driver will wait 180 seconds for students to get on a bus each morning or unload each afternoon. This is such a short amount of time, but it is enough time for a tragedy to occur.

In 2004, Isaac Bryan, an elementary school student in the Bryant School District, was struck and killed when a motorist illegally passed his stopped school bus as students were unloading. Through the work of his parents, law enforcement and concerned community leaders, the Arkansas legislature passed Isaac's Law in 2005. This legislation increased the fines, penalties and punishment for anyone found guilty of illegally passing a stopped school bus. Unfortunately, this new law has not been enough to avoid other senseless tragedies.

Everyone must do their part to keep our children safe as they travel to and from school and school-related activities each day. Parents can help by talking with their children about the safety rules for going to and from the bus stop, getting on and off the bus, and riding in the bus. Motorists can also help by paying special attention to safe driving rules and obeying all traffic laws. We must work together to keep our children safe.

Please help our students have a safe and productive school year. We are asking all motorists to remember: ***Flashing Red. Kids Ahead.***